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ABSTRACT

Accountability is being required of all America's institutions of higher education. Gallaudet College, an institution for the deaf in Washington, D.C., feels it has found a solution to the accountability problem in the use of "measurable objectives" in its program planning. The first phase from January 1 through June 30, 1972 of Gallaudet's program planning produced three and ten-year projections or program plans by all college units, based on then-current mission statements and program assumptions. A critical path method (CPM) network was developed for this first phase and reviewed with unit administrators, with chairmen of instructional departments, with student representatives, and with a group of eight outside consultants. The second phase of Gallaudet's master-plan development involved an emphasis on three objectives: the expression of goals in measurable terms, management based on program plans expressed in measurable objectives, and computer simulation to aid in administrative decisionmaking. Gallaudet is employing the PLANTRAN II computer program in its current effort to develop long-range budget projections for each department. One element attributed to the success of Gallaudet's new planning effort is an institutional commitment to provide the necessary funds and manpower so that the master plan can be continually updated on an annual basis. (Author/PG)

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Planning and the "Measurable Objective"

Accountability increasingly is being required of America's institutions of higher education. But how best to meet that new demand? One institution, Gallaudet College, an institution for the deaf in Washington, D.C., feels it has found a solution in the use of "measurable objectives" in its program planning. The Gallaudet story is set forth in the following article by Ronald H. Miller, project coordinator for the New York Regional Center for Life-Long Learning at Pace College and a member of the SCUP Editorial Advisory Committee.

The Gallaudet approach involves the expression of program plans in "measurable objectives," understandable to students, faculty, administrators, and the general public. By implementing its master planning process so as to produce measurable objectives, the world's only accredited liberal arts college for the deaf is better equipped to meet the future, according to R. Orin Cornett, vice president for planning and public service.

By the mid-1980s Gallaudet anticipates reaching a maximum enrollment of 2,700 on its 93-acre campus in northeast Washington. Approximately 1,500 students will be enrolled in preparatory and undergraduate programs, 300 in graduate programs, 600 in a model secondary school, and nearly 300 in the college's Kendall Demonstration Elementary School.

Gallaudet, established in 1864 by an act of Congress, offers programs in seven areas: a liberal arts and sciences undergraduate college, a graduate school, a center for continuing education, public service and extension programs, a model secondary school, the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School, and research across a broad spectrum of areas related to deafness, speech, and hearing.

"I think," Cornett said, "that if Gallaudet has a message for other institutions, it would be that the time is here or is fast approaching when institutions must be accountable in a new sense. The process by which we submit our budget requests to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (DHEW) and in turn to the Congress has required more and more specificity and more and more expression in terms that could be understood clearly by someone outside the field of (education). As a result, we came to the conclusion that we needed to develop program planning, which we expressed in terms of measurable objectives, so that we would be able, after the fact, to determine whether or not we had accomplished what we said we were going to do. We wanted planning that would allow other people to determine whether or not we had accomplished our objectives."

The current implementation of a master planning process at Gallaudet is the second phase in development of a complete master plan. The first phase – January 1 through June 30, 1972 – produced five- and ten-year projections or program plans by all college units, based on then-current mission statements and program assumptions.

SAVED BY THE DEADLINE

Cornett, however, was not pleased with first-phase results. "It's impossible to develop a new program plan in six months and have it mean anything," he explained. "All you get is a linear projection of what you have been doing."

But an unexpected relaxation is the deadline by which Gallaudet was to submit a total plan to DHEW offered the opportunity to improve on the first effort. Gallaudet had been under the impression that the plan, designed to permit DHEW officials to judge appropriations requests for both new buildings and programs, had to be ready by June 30, 1972. But, on completion of the first phase, it learned it had another year to complete the total plan – as much time as the college had originally requested.

Accordingly, the planners decided to backtrack and redo the first phase, which was regarded as "a basis for planning" and offered the opportunity to "translate the program plans into measurable terms." A critical path method (CPM) network was developed and reviewed with unit administrators (who report directly to the

president) both individually and as a group, with chairmen of both operating and instructional departments, with student representatives, and with a group of eight outside consultants. By completion of the network last September 1st, agreement not only had been reached on the tasks to be accomplished but on the individuals who were to carry them out. The network was printed and distributed within the college.[1]

"There's a great difference," Cornett commented, "when a CPM network is in everyone's hands and (when it) identifies individuals who have the responsibility for certain assignments. Everyone involved is well aware that his name is there and that, if the process breaks down, he'll look like the culprit. It's a powerful thing, an innocuous type of pressure. Nobody has to get after him. I've been amazed at the way things have come in on time."

The CPM document also includes separate networks for each of the college's principal offices, designed with the cooperation of the individual departments. Cornett stressed that, while the entire faculty was not on campus when the initial decision was made and while more time for faculty consideration would have been desirable, the college went "to great lengths" to get people involved in the process. "This (the CPM network) was a new thing for the college and could not be pushed down people's throats."

THE SECOND-PHASE EFFORT

The second phase of Gallaudet's master-plan development involved an emphasis on three objectives: the expression of goals in measurable terms, management based on program plans expressed in measurable objectives, and computer simulation to aid in administrative decision-making.

Cornett sees four advantages in the use of measurable objectives in an educational program. First, he argues, it makes it possible for both student and instructor to determine after the fact whether their objectives were achieved. Third, it permits administrators to determine whether a staff member has attained his objectives and, if not, permits the staff member to establish that the failure occurred for reasons beyond his control – if that was the case. Finally, and critically, it enables the college to show the outside decision-makers who control the purse strings just what the institution is attempting to accomplish and how well it is succeeding.

On the other hand, Cornett concedes that "academia is not unanimous" about the introduction of the sort of accountability involved in Gallaudet's "measurable objectives" and that "some concern" about their use was voiced by the college's faculty.

However, it happened that a voluntary effort among a small number of Gallaudet faculty had been under way for several years aimed at the development of behavioral objectives and performance objectives at the course level. Rather than force a similar effort on the entire faculty and possibly nip the experimental project in the bud, it was decided that all departments, both academic and service, would be asked to develop performance objectives, not for all students in every course, but for the students majoring in their departmental disciplines. This approach avoided pressuring the individual faculty member in favor of collective departmental responsibility for developing performance objectives stating what a departmental graduate should be able to do and what he should know upon graduation. Similarly, departments offering courses required of all students were asked to set performance objectives for that part of the students' work.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE STUDENT

"We hope," Cornett commented, "that the faculty will all move along and within a few years identify performance objectives for (all) courses. We think the students themselves will push for this."

He notes that the project had given rise to rumors among the students that the college was planning to require comprehensive examinations for graduation. One student, he added, inquired about the rumor and was "very happy" to learn that the underlying motive was to "make the college accountable to students."

"We want the student to know what he is supposed to be getting . . . here . . . We want the teachers in the departments to commit themselves to do certain things for the students, to give them certain capabilities and levels of performance. Then, if they don't do that, the department is failing in its objectives. It has nothing to do with whether the student fails or not. The department establishes that connection."

Gallaudet's implementation of its "measurable objectives" program planning involved a number of key approaches. One was the use of outside consultants to provide the expertise required to implement the program in a limited period of time and provide know-how not available on the campus. Perhaps more important was the formulation of objectives by those responsible for carrying them out, in cooperation with their colleagues and with those to whom they are responsible.

"If all of these people are involved in the establishment and refinement of the objectives," Cornett noted, "then you've got a contract."

Once that contract has been established, he added, the process then becomes one of "management by

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objectives." Faculty are required to report on their achievement or failures in terms of stated objectives. At the same time they are in a position to identify roadblocks to achievement. Salary increase, promotion, and tenure decisions can be based on measurable achievement. And budget requests can be expressed, measured, and revised according to stated objectives.

Management by objectives involves its own complications, Cornett concedes, particularly in the communications problem resulting from the need to secure agreement on a particular objective from more than one individual. He admits that, with the approach reflected for the first time in this year's budget requests, Gallaudet is "not that deep into management by objectives" but he suggests that the requests so far "seem to be quite in line" in terms of faithfulness to the master plan.

COMPUTER SIMULATION

Computer simulation has been adopted at Gallaudet to meet two essential requirements: the need to ask "what if" questions as part of planning and budget projections and the need to meet incessant federal demands for information.

"DHEW," Cornet says, "may call us on a Monday morning and ask us for a five-year budget projection by noon on Friday."

Gallaudet is employing the PLANTRAN II computer program in its current effort to develop long-range budget projections for each department by July. A computerized data base also is expected to be ready by that time. Plans call for a series of institutional self-studies beginning in July as well as analyses of as many budgets and program plans as seems desirable. Gallaudet employs remote terminals in using PLANTRAN II, the first institution to do so, according to Cornett.

Cornett attributes the success to date of Gallaudet's new planning effort to an institutional commitment to provide the necessary funds and manpower and to a policy requiring that the master plan be continually updated on an annual basis. The planning timetable is the responsibility of a full-time coordinator of the CPM network, who produces monthly progress reports and outlines the steps each administrator must take each month to keep the network on schedule.

The final master plan, now in draft form and subject to board approval, will be kept in loose-leaf form for staff use (bound copies will be provided for outsiders[2]) to facilitate revisions, which will be based primarily on a new annual departmental reporting system. In their reports, the departments will include progress on master plan objectives for current and future years, the degree of achievement for each objective, explain failures to achieve objectives, and request master plan revisions, such as deletion or addition of objectives. Major plan revisions are envisioned every three to five years.

Cornett sees three weaknesses in the plan in its present state of development: it has not been "reduced to reality," it was developed too rapidly, and "three-level" communication for management by objectives has been only partly achieved. Rapid development, Cornett points out, occurred out of necessity and he feels annual updating and revision will improve the plan. He believes the short time frame created a situation in which some departments used only one or two people to draft measurable objectives.

Progress to date in Gallaudet's master planning effort may be best reflected in one staff member's comment: "I hate this master plan. It's a pain in the neck. But it's the greatest thing that ever happened to us. This is the first time we've gotten down to what it is we're trying to do."

Ronald H. Miller

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[1] Gallaudet College, *Master Plan Development Program, 1972-1973.* Limited number of copies available.

[2] Gallaudet College, *Program Master Plan Summary, Including Pre-College Programs, Draft, March 1973.* Limited number of copies available on a loan basis.

Note: For both documents, write to: Office of the Vice President for Planning and Public Service, Gallaudet College, Kendall Green, Washington, D.C. 20002.